

chance. With frantic energy, wild din, and vain repetitions, they increase their cry until noon, the hour of the sun's greatest power, but not a single ray was shot to light their sacrifice. The Lord's prophet witnessing their abortive efforts lashed them with ironical mockery (v. 27). The sarcasm stung them to redoubled effort, but all in vain. At eventide "there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded." One-half of the question had been decided. The claims of Baal could not hold good; he could neither answer by water nor by fire. Jezebel's priests had lost their opportunity, but Elijah's opportunity had come.

At the call of Elijah the people came near to him, and with minute regularity he rebuilt the altar, taking twelve stones, according to the number of tribes. To demonstrate the reality of the miracle, twelve barrels of water were poured on the sacrifice and on the wood. Elijah was in no hurry; he had a certainty before him, and could afford to be careful about details. It was the time of evening sacrifice when he began to pray (vs. 36, 37). No sooner had the prayer been uttered than the heavens were rent, and from the cloudless sky the fire of the Lord fell visibly down upon the altar in such devouring energy that even the stones were consumed and the water licked up from the trench. The effect was irresistible. The judgment was not only heard and seen, but it impressed every faculty of sense. Every knee smote the dust and every face sought the ground, and one loud cry went up from the people, "The Lord, He is the God; the Lord, He is the God." But the priests of Baal, the enemies of God, the troublers of Israel, refusing submission, were ripe for destruction, and were slain according to the law governing such cases (Deut. 6: 14, 15).

Decision for and against God is still insisted upon. "No man can serve two masters." From the law of God working in spiritual affairs, it is clear that the balance of power does not depend on numbers. The monarchs of earthly empires form alliances, offensive and defensive, by which each pledges the whole force of his kingdom to the support of the other. But the true man of God has allies more imperial than winds and waters or human forces. "The battle is not ours but God's." The world, the Baal of to-day, can do nothing for man in his extremity. God only can kindle the holy, purifying fire of a genuine, religious experience. Fire was God's ancient sign. Fire from heaven converted apostate Israel in Elijah's day, and pentecostal fire began the conversion of Israel and other nations in the Apostles' day. God has lots of that same fire left and will give it to those who, like Elijah, can say, "I have done all these things at Thy word."



LESSON 4.—JULY 24, 1898.

Elijah's Flight and Encouragement.

(Lesson Text: 1 Kings 19: 1-16. Memory Verses: 9-12.)
(Read the chapter.)

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him."—Psalm 37: 7.

DAILY READINGS. Monday: 1 Kings 19: 1-8. Tuesday: 1 Kings 19: 9-18. Wednesday: Psal. 55: 1-8. Thursday: Psalm 42. Friday: Exod. 33: 12-23. Saturday: Psal. 56. Sunday: Psal. 120, 121.

The Heart of the Lesson.

Strong and straight as the pine on a Canadian slope before a thunderstorm, stood Elijah at the summit of his majesty on Carmel in the midst of the Baal worshippers. But Elijah had his panic times, his moments of depression. Of a sanguine tempera-

ment, exhilarated by success, the excitement of the contest sustained him for a time; but reaction followed the nervous tension and the strong man became weak. "Elijah was a man of like passions with us." It is not in human nature to be as great continuously as Elijah was occasionally. The boldness of God's servants have had such seasons of depression. Because a man has been brave in one emergency is not a guarantee that he will be equally brave in the next. And because a man seems cowardly at one time, it is not fair to suppose that he would never act courageously. There is a lesson of warning here, a lesson of charity in the judgment of others. We need fresh strength for every new duty, and a man never needs the grace of God more than when he has just had phenomenal success. Defeat at Ai is apt to follow a Jericho victory in every life. Elated by success on Carmel, the prophet ran ahead of Ahab's chariot to the gates of the city of Jezreel, a distance of seventeen miles. Here he found no general uprising, such as he had expected. Baal was still supreme. The impression made upon the fickle people was transient. Ahab was unchanged; and his wife with heart as hard as a nether millstone, convinced that she could accomplish her purpose, fixed the date for Elijah's execution. Hence, in sudden consternation, forgetting all about God's care in the past, he stole away in the darkness and "went for his life." God had sent him to Cherith, to Zarepath, to meet Ahab, but this time he impulsively selected his own course under the counsel of fear, rather than the guidance of faith. A servant of God should not leave his work on account of danger till God points the way. The first halt in Elijah's flight was at Beersheba, where he left his servant while he went a day's journey into the wilderness where, weary in body, baffled, disheartened, humiliated, and cross-tempered, he flung himself under the shade of a juniper tree and wished to die. God does not give up a man simply because he has made a mistake. Men turn from us coldly when we fail to accomplish what is expected; but the Lord restores Peter, and decrees that Elijah's grave shall not be under the tree in the wilderness. "The bruised reed He will not break." The ravens and the widow had been his caterers during the famine. Now, twice God's angels spread his table, and, refreshed, he "went in the strength of that meat forty days."

We next see him at Horeb, the ancient haunt of his forefathers, where Moses saw the burning bush, where Aaron and Hur held up his hands, where the rock was smitten and the water gushed out. It is significant that the history of Israel should once more touch this sacred spot. Now to be associated with the name of the restorer of the law, as it had been with the name of the founder of the law, both peculiar in their departure from this world and both standing afterwards with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. At Horeb, the prophet found refuge in a cave, perhaps the cleft in which God hid Moses (Ex. 22: 22). Here the Word of the Lord came to him (v. 9), and he answered (v. 10). He was too hasty in drawing his conclusions. He was wrong in his arithmetic (v. 18). To this complaint the Lord made answer by calling Elijah to the mouth of the cave. Then there was a revelation of God, recalling that granted to Moses (Ex. 24: 17). The wind roaring wildly, the earthquake making the mountains tremble, the fire, forked and flashing, lighting up each pinnacle and cavernous depth, and then the still, small voice. Elijah's ministry began with judgment and stern retribution and, perhaps, this phenomena was to show the superiority of another class of work, represented in the sound of